



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Reef resilience projects at Cairns' Moore Reef; a small scale start towards better stewardship**

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IN an innovative joint stewardship initiative, dedicated coral scientists, Traditional Owners, marine tourism operators and Cairns community groups are this week joining together to work on a range of reef-recovery and restoration projects designed to help a small but special part of the Great Barrier Reef better cope and recover from the potentially devastating impacts of climate change.

Despite recent challenges including coronavirus shutdowns and associated economic difficulties, tourism staff and coral researchers from several key Far North Queensland organisations are this week heading out to stunning Moore Reef – 45 kilometres east of Cairns – to advance their knowledge and understanding of reef damage from coral bleaching and the progress of recovery and resilience efforts.

The wide-ranging two-day scientific expedition will conduct underwater coral recovery surveys, check in-water instruments and collect data to measure and study how different coral reef restoration projects and technologies have progressed.

The trips, with media invited to report on reef recovery progress on Thursday, August 13, will use the reef tourism vessel Reef Magic II, to travel to the Marine World pontoon at Moore Reef.

Moore Reef is a stunning and extensive series of offshore coral atolls, deep bommies that rise to the water surface and beautiful underwater coral reefs along the Great Barrier Reef located right next to the 30 metre- deep plunging wall of the Outer Reef.

Besides being a location visited regularly by Cairns-based tourism operators, it is also of great interest scientifically as its corals have proved remarkably resilient to past-bleaching events, including the latest in early 2020.

Marine biologists and coral scientists are keen to better understand why reef recovery at Moore Reef has been so strong, with potential issues such as coral genetics and type, water quality, water temperature and mixing, and cooling currents being investigated.

This week's scientific expedition is being organised and partly- funded by the [Reef and Rainforest Research Centre](#) (RRRC), a Cairns-based non-profit organisation focused on delivering science solutions for the tropics.

"Most of the organisations in Cairns who are involved with reef restoration, including RRRC, have been working together with the tourism industry to share resources and know-how over the past few years," said RRRC Managing Director Sheriden Morris.

“We all operate on tight budgets, often relying on volunteers even during the best of times, and the last few months especially have been really hard for everyone economically. But it’s also more important now than ever that we work together to do what we can to help both the Reef and the Cairns community.”

During the two days of research this week, an RRRC team will be checking in-water instruments as part of the [Reef Havens Research Project](#), measuring water temperature, water mixing and cooling currents on established research sites to learn why coral recovery has been so good.

Indigenous traditional owners involved in the [Yirrganydji Land & Sea Rangers](#) program will be testing new underwater drone survey equipment.

Coral researchers from James Cook University’s Tropwater Facility will be helping Mars Sustainable Solutions staff survey [rates of coral growth on structures](#), called Reef Stars, that have been placed underwater to stabilise coral rubble patches that have been caused by cyclone damage.

The [Reef Restoration Foundation](#) will also be part of the scientific group, scouting locations for future coral nursery projects.

Also aboard the boat will be several Cairns locals who are members of the community-based “citizen scientists” group, Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef ([citizensgbr.org](#)). They will be trying out their new [underwater visual census](#) methods as part of the Great Reef Census assessing reef damage and where coral resilience and recovery occurs.

All activities at Moore Reef this week will be ably supported by tourism vessels and staff from [Reef Magic](#) and [GBR Biology](#), as well as a number of highly-trained divers from the Inloc Group involved in the critical [crown-of-thorns starfish control program](#).

“The good news is, we’ve seen 100% recovery from this summer’s coral bleaching event at Reef Magic’s Marine World pontoon at Moore Reef,” said Biology Manager Eric Fisher from GBR Biology.

“This area has historically shown strong resilience and therefore is an excellent site to increase our understanding of natural and assisted recovery processes.”

RRRC’s Sheriden Morris agrees. “At a time of such difficulty – climate change affecting the health of the Great Barrier Reef with another bleaching event in early 2020, and coronavirus travel restrictions causing a crisis for our tourism industry – we also see an opportunity for the Cairns community.

“We believe Cairns can emerge as a world-leader in reef restoration tools and techniques, with huge potential for flow-on social and economic benefits in terms of reef stewardship, manufacturing and local jobs,” Ms Morris said.

“Already we are showing great progress; the tools we are collaboratively developing here could benefit not just Moore Reef, but other special places on the Great Barrier Reef, other reefs worldwide, and the human communities who rely on their ongoing health.”

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For further information, assistance or access to photos or footage, pls contact:

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Dr Long will be on board Thursday's trip to Moore Reef and available for interviews, as well as Eric Fisher from GBR Biology and many other leading coral scientists, Traditional Owners and Great Barrier Reef researcher from the below organisations.



**CITIZENS OF THE  
GREAT BARRIER REEF**